



Directorate of
Intelligence

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Afghanistan Situation Report

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11 April 1983

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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The Afghan secret police have increased harassment of the Embassy's foreign national employees, and the Embassy no longer excludes the possibility of being shut down at some point. [redacted]

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Although the food situation in Afghanistan probably will remain generally adequate in most areas in 1983, spot shortages and disruptions will pose hardships among the civilian population in some key locations. [redacted]

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This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near East/South Asia and the Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments on the issues raised in the publication should be directed [redacted]

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INCREASED HARASSMENT OF US EMBASSY IN KABUL

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The US Embassy in Kabul reports the arrest of its seventh Afghan employee. In addition, for the first time, one of the Embassy's non-Afghan foreign employees, a Pakistani, has disappeared and has probably been arrested. Similarly, for the first time, KHAD has told several Embassy guards in writing to quit their jobs because they had not cooperated with the secret police. The Embassy thinks that KHAD's primary goal is to reduce contacts with Afghans in hope of restricting the scope of the Embassy's weekly sitrep, which is used to brief the press, and it no longer excludes the possibility of being closed down, perhaps in late April, on the anniversary of the 1978 coup.

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Comment: KHAD does appear to be engaged in a systematic attempt to reduce the Embassy to a skeleton staff, and some KHAD personnel probably would like to expel all US personnel as well. At the end of 1981, the Embassy had 20 white-collar foreign employees; at the end of 1982, it had 15; and now it has only 11. In addition to reducing the scope of the weekly sitrep, KHAD may also want to staff the Embassy with its own informants. The main reason for not shutting down the Embassy completely, however, is the possibility that other Western embassies might then close voluntarily. Both the Soviets and Babrak probably prefer to maintain the Western presence because it confers a certain legitimacy and facilitates commercial contacts.

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INSURGENT ATTACKS ON POWERLINES

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Further information concerning insurgent attacks on electric transmission lines in the Kabul area has recently become available.

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three electric power pylons were damaged or destroyed about 38 kilometers east of Kabul along the Kabul-to-Sorubi powerline.

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[redacted] press reports indicate that insurgents attacked pylons along the powerline on one or more occasions during the winter.

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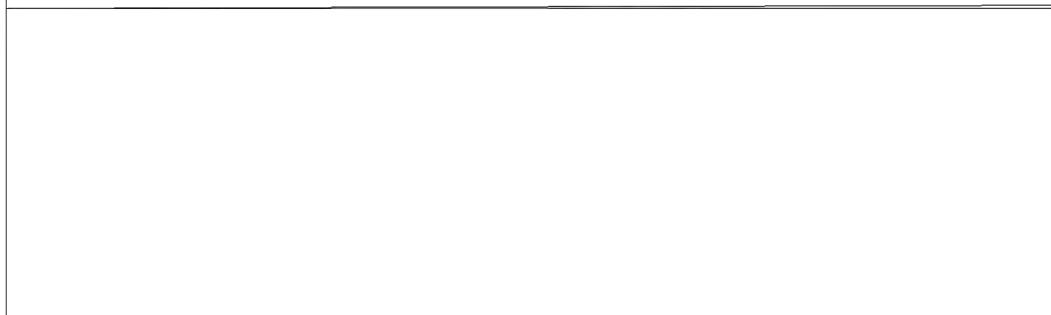
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US Embassy reporting indicates that residents of Kabul generally blame the Afghan authorities and the Soviets--not the insurgents--for the resulting power outages.

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Comment: The attack was carried out in remote mountainous terrain, probably to provide cover for the insurgents and to complicate repairs for the authorities. We judge that the reported countermeasures planned by the Soviets would impede but not prevent the insurgents from attacking other pylons, particularly in remote areas.

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This article was prepared principally by the Office of Imagery Analysis.

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PERSPECTIVE

AFGHANISTAN: THE FOOD SITUATION [redacted]

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Although the food situation in Afghanistan probably will remain generally adequate in most areas in 1983, spot shortages and disruptions will pose hardships among the civilian population in some key locations. Satellite photography indicates that, even in the major zones of conflict, crops were usually sown and harvested roughly on time in 1982. Many sources indicate, however, that the disruption of the transportation systems, the government's inability to collect grain and other agricultural products in insurgent-controlled areas, and the reluctance of some farmers to sell to the government have created serious shortages in Soviet-controlled areas. This increases dependence on food imports from the USSR. Military operations have also disrupted agriculture in some locations bordering Pakistan and areas adjacent to Kabul, including the Panjsher Valley. Continuing food shortages in these areas would put an extra burden on insurgent groups in trying to feed both themselves and their civilian supporters. [redacted]

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Agricultural Production

Most Afghan farms were not seriously affected either by the Soviet occupation or by insurgent activity during the 1983 crop season. Satellite photography of the grain-producing areas of the country indicates that fair to good crop conditions prevailed through the growing season in most regions and that harvesting was initiated on or nearly on schedule. Most of rural Afghanistan, which is largely controlled by the insurgents, appears to be self-sufficient in food. [redacted]

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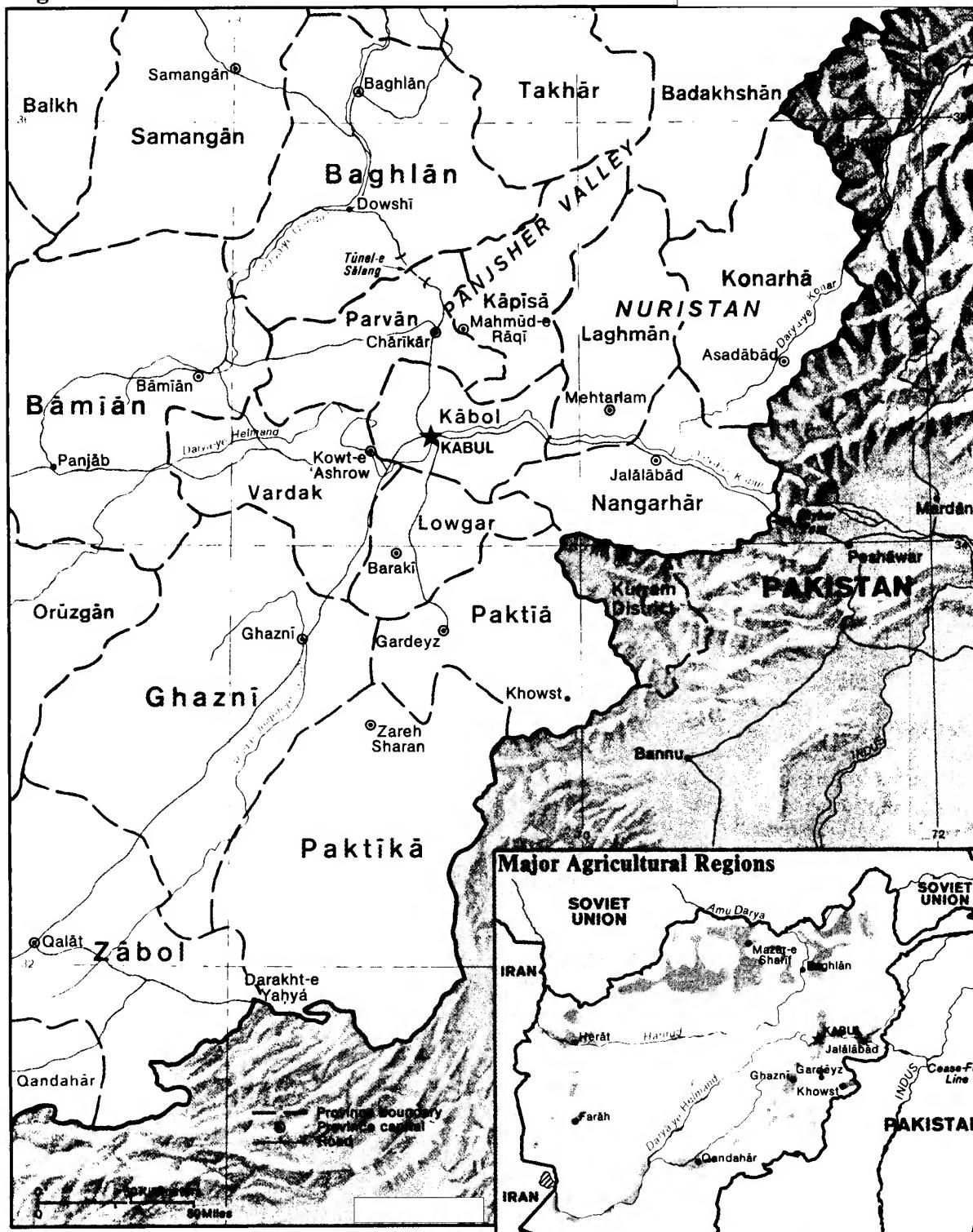
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Although meteorological data for Afghanistan in 1982 are incomplete, [redacted] the weather was generally good throughout the year. During the winter of 1981-1982, areas north of Kabul received slightly above-average precipitation, and ground water supplies were adequate, as imagery reveals. Canals in the irrigation networks were generally filled throughout the growing season. [redacted]

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Afghanistan: Kabul Area

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Nonetheless, the war in Afghanistan has disrupted the country's agricultural economy. The Babrak regime has little influence over agricultural production and distribution and requires substantial Soviet assistance to feed government-controlled urban areas. Military operations in some key insurgent-controlled areas have caused shortages and hardships there. Prices for agricultural products are generally rising because of shortages. [redacted]

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Problems for the Government

The Afghan Government faces a number of obstacles to maintaining or increasing production. [redacted] the government is having little success in gaining farmers' loyalty, and farmers remain reluctant to expand production under the threat of collectivization. Fearing even sharper cuts in production than those that have already occurred, Kabul has made no inroads in socializing Afghanistan's farms, although some agricultural production is under collective or state auspices. The revised land reform program is largely a failure because of the government's corruption and incompetence and its inability to guarantee sufficient food, shelter, tools, and seeds to begin production. Despite official claims of improved irrigation facilities, fertilizer use, and mechanization, we have found no evidence of large-scale farm improvements. [redacted]

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Various Western sources, including the US Department of Agriculture, estimate total foodgrain production in 1982 at 3.4 million tons, with wheat accounting for 2.2 million tons. This compares with an average foodgrain production of 4.7 million tons for the five years preceding the Soviet invasion in 1979. In contrast, the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reform in January 1983 announced highly satisfactory results for agriculture for 1982 and for grain production in particular, estimating total foodgrain output in 1982 at 4.5 million tons. [redacted]

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We believe the Western estimates are more accurate than the Babrak government's figure, because the insurgency has sharply limited the regime's access to rural areas. Because the insurgents have control over most of the countryside, government officials cannot move freely about to gather agricultural data. Moreover, since the Soviet invasion, Kabul's efforts to conceal economic deterioration have made the collection of reliable data even more difficult than previously. Various international reporting and contradictory statements by the

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Afghan Government suggest that Kabul is trying to counter Western criticism of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan by overestimating crop production and land under cultivation. [redacted]

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Despite its claims to the contrary, the Afghan Government publicly announced in October 1982 that the country was facing "a shortage of food and malnutrition" and that "each year, 150,000 to 200,000 tons of wheat" are imported, along with large quantities of rice, cooking oil, sugar, and dairy products. Our assessment shows that food shortages, particularly in the cities, would be serious were it not for large-scale imports of up to 350,000 tons annually. In contrast, Kabul imported an average of only 85,000 tons annually for the five years preceding the Soviet occupation. All of the country's imported foodgrains are supplied by the Soviet Union, either directly or through purchases on world markets. [redacted]

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[redacted] Of the total land area of 65 million hectares (ha) in Afghanistan, only 8 million is arable, and half of that amount is cultivated yearly. Historically, the total area under wheat has averaged about 2.4 million ha, of which 1.3 million ha is irrigated and about 1.1 million ha is rainfed. Some arable land is left fallow each year because of insufficient irrigation water and the need to rejuvenate the fields. Owing to the lack of cropland imagery prior to the Soviet invasion, we cannot judge accurately the direction of trends in the amount of land left fallow under Soviet occupation. [redacted]

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Commercial crops, which normally account for 10 percent of total arable land, appear to have had a mixed record. Official estimates even show increases of some products. We are skeptical of the government figures, however, given the decline of available labor and draft animals in cash crop areas, as reported by Western observers. [redacted]

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Various reports indicate mixed results in livestock production. Historically, livestock production accounts for approximately 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product and provides 30 percent of total export earnings. Official data indicate increases in the production of horses, donkeys, and camels, which are used principally for transportation. Sheep provide the principal meat in the Afghan diet, but excessive slaughtering over the past two years has limited their increases. Meat shortages cannot readily be resolved by imports, because most Afghans refuse to eat meat from animals not killed in Afghanistan. [redacted]

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Shortages in Key Areas

Although there appears to be enough food in the countryside to feed the local population and the insurgents, imagery and human source reports have identified food shortages in four geographic areas important to the insurgency. [redacted]

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[redacted] there are severe food shortages in the strategic Panjsher Valley, 60 miles northeast of Kabul. Declining civilian morale--because of Soviet military pressure, increased casualties, and lack of food and shelter--was probably a factor in the interest of the local insurgent leader Masood in cease-fire negotiations with the Soviets. Imagery confirms that a few fields have been burned in the area, and farming was reportedly disrupted by military operations in the spring and fall. Earlier imagery from June and July, however, suggests a fair yield of winter grains in most parts of the valley. [redacted]

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In the lower Konar Valley, near the Pakistan border northeast of Jalalabad, yields in 1982 ranged only from poor to fair, according to imagery analysis. The relatively poorer crop here does not appear to be a result of deliberate crop destruction by hostile military action, but rather the consequence of a locally severe labor shortage, which, in turn, precipitated the abandonment of some tracts of previously cultivated land. Furthermore, the Konar Valley grain crop was harvested in mid-May, and may have been cut before it was fully ripe. This would naturally result in lower yields. [redacted]

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The grain crop also looked poor on imagery for a few locations of Paktia Province, southeast of Kabul, where insurgency at times has been intense. As a result of military activity near the town of Khost, some agricultural land and crops were destroyed, and military equipment has been observed in grain fields at the edge of town. Even here, however, winter grains sown in fields adjacent to the battle zones were harvested. The proximity of this area to Kurram Province in Pakistan permits Afghans living in Pakistan-based refugee camps to work their fields in Afghanistan without much difficulty. [redacted]

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A number of Western journalists and Afghan refugees in Pakistan have filed accounts of the bombing of villages and the destruction of crops by Soviet forces in Lowgar Province, south of Kabul. One report, written in September, states that harvested grain in that area had been burned and that irrigation systems in several villages along the Kabul-Gardez road had been destroyed. [redacted] Soviet and Afghan troops have attempted to create a "sanitary zone" along the road by burning the vegetation. Unfortunately, imagery is not available either to confirm or to refute these claims. [redacted]

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[redacted] Soviet military operations have caused scattered destruction of fields and livestock. Satellite photography indicates there was no systematic burning of fields in 1982, and crop damage from military operations appears to be limited. [redacted]

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Prices

The war and resulting spot shortages have increased the prices of agricultural products. The Afghan Government claims that consumer prices increased 12 to 15 percent over the last two years, held down by controls and subsidies and the large volume of goods passing through government-owned and cooperative shops. However, unofficial sources claim that inflation is running about 100 percent or more. Data collected from a variety of sources since 1980 show a number of significant price increases. Price increases for cooking oil, mutton, bread, and rice suggest shortfalls as well as distribution difficulties. On the other hand, the prices of flour, beef, camel meat, and chicken increased only moderately during the reporting period, reflecting less severe shortages of these items. The prices of fruits, nuts, and vegetables show little or no increase over the reporting period, reflecting their abundance. Many of these food items grow wild in Afghanistan and have shown great resistance to war activities. [redacted]

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Outlook

We do not expect any major change in Afghanistan's food situation in 1983, although the fighting will probably continue to cause shortages in some areas. Shortages will continue to plague major Afghan urban centers, given the disruption of the distribution system, the susceptibility of Soviet convoys to insurgent attacks, and the dependence of the occupied urban areas on Soviet imports. In insurgent-controlled areas, the Soviets will probably attempt to use scorched-earth tactics selectively to punish insurgent supporters or to force them into Afghanistan's cities where they are more easily controlled. Because of the exodus of some 3 million refugees and the thousands of Afghan casualties, the available work force has declined. We believe the work force decline is already beginning to result in lowered agricultural output in selected areas despite the periodic return of some refugees to both farm and fight. Given the trends, Afghan agriculture would worsen only gradually, over the longer term. If the Soviets increase the intensity and scope of their military activities, more severe consequences for the food supply will probably result.

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